



Trusteeship Council

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COMMUNICATION FROM THE REVEREND JOHN COLLINS AND SISTER BLAISE LUPO,
CO-DIRECTORS CLERGY AND LAITY CONCERNED, CONCERNING THE TRUST
TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

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Clergy and Laity Concerned
198 Broadway
New York, N. Y. 10038
13 January 1983

Mr. James L. Buckley
Under Secretary of State for Security
Assistance, Science and Technology
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Buckley:

Six months ago, we exchanged letters relating to the current situation in Belau. Our concern was, and continues to be, that in the negotiations on Belau's future, the State Department has ignored the right to self-determination of the Belauans as they work towards a nuclear-free future.

Since that time, of course, the United States Government and representatives of the Republic of Palau have signed the compact of free association, which would allow the United States to buy military rights in Belau for a period of 50 years. A plebiscite has been hastily called, and the compact is scheduled to go before the electorate for a vote in less than a month, on 10 February. In the interests of self-determination for the Belauan people, we urge you in the strongest terms to postpone the plebiscite.

As you know, the negotiation of the compact has taken 13 years to complete. The result has been a tremendously complex 300-page document which affects the entire future of the Belauan people. It would allow the United States to begin using one third of Belau's land for military purposes, as well as permit the introduction of nuclear weapons onto Belauan soil. Clearly, it is necessary for

the Belauan people to have adequate time to consider carefully all provisions of the compact before they become locked into an arrangement permitting a strong foreign military presence in their country.

The 10 February plebiscite, scheduled for a mere six months after the compact's signing, makes such careful consideration impossible. Moreover, some provisions of the critical capital improvements programme agreement were still being negotiated in November, making the political education process all the more difficult. Added to the over-all climate of uncertainty is the fact that the plebiscite date has been announced and changed at least three times. Reliable church sources in Belau have informed us that the grassroots voters are not at all prepared for the plebiscite.

Although the 26 August document agreed to by both countries contains the principle that the plebiscites in the compact of free association should be held simultaneously in Belau, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, the Belauan plebiscite set for 10 February has already violated that principle. Many observers, including many of us in the religious community, see a concerted effort on the part of the United States to push through with the plebiscite without any regard for the Belauan people's right to self-determination.

Most disturbing to us is what appears to be the blatantly deceptive wording of question B on the ballot, relating to the introduction of radioactive, chemical, and biological materials into Belau. On three separate occasions, the Belauan people have overwhelmingly expressed their desire for a nuclear-free constitution. By means of a misleading ballot question, the United States appears to be trying to undermine the constitution's nuclear-free provisions with a 75 per cent vote in favour of question B.

The Belauan people will be asked if they approve the "restrictions and conditions on the United States with respect to radioactive, chemical and biological materials". As we all know, however, these so-called "restrictions" are no restrictions at all: the agreement regarding radioactive, chemical and biological substances allows the United States to bring nuclear weapons into Belau during a time of "military necessity as determined by the Government of the United States". It is difficult for us to see this wording as anything but a carefully conceived plan to trick the Belauan people.

Let us remind you that under the provisions of the 1947 United Nations Trust Territory Agreement 1/ which put Micronesia under United States control, our Government pledged that it shall "foster the development of such political institutions as are suited to the Trust Territory and shall promote the development

of the inhabitants of the Trust Territory towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Trust Territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned".

The plans for a hasty plebiscite, as well as the use of a deceptively-worded ballot, will clearly be unable to elicit the "freely expressed wishes" of the Belauan people. As American citizens, we demand that our Government immediately begin to honour both its pledges to the United Nations and the wishes of the Belauan people, as expressed in the nuclear-free constitution. In the interests of democracy and self-determination, the plebiscite must be postponed to allow for a proper voter education drive.

For justice and peace,

(Signed) Rev. John COLLINS

(Signed) Sr. Blaise LUPO, M.M.
Co-directors

cc: Ambassador Fred Zeder; Mr. Pedro Sanjuan; The Secretary, United Nations
Trusteeship Council

Notes

1/ Trusteeship Agreement for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
(United Nations publication, Sales No. 1957.VI.A.1).
